

THURSDAY,
JANUARY 14, 2010
SECTION E

home & garden

KEEPING UP WITH THE UZELACS

WHILE DESIGNING THEIR NEW HOME, THIS COUPLE FAVORS GREEN

BY ERIKA ROSE

Times Correspondent

After buying some land in St. John in 2006 on which they planned to build their dream home, Nenad and Biljana Uzelac were talking to a friend who had also bought a parcel on which to build.

The friend asked about geothermal heating, noting it was part of the "green movement" to which Nenad, an electrical engineer, responded, "What is the green movement?"

"I thought maybe it would mean an energy efficient heater," Nenad says. "I didn't really know what it meant. A few bookshelves later, I had a pretty good understanding of what it is."

A few feet from one of those bookshelves, with his wife Biljana, a pediatrician, and their 4-year-old son Kosta playing nearby, Nenad explains the resulting "engineering challenge" he embarked on when he decided to join the eco-friendly club.

As defined by the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), "green buildings are designed to reduce the overall impact of the built environment on human health and the natural environment by: efficiently using energy, water, and other resources; protecting occupant health and improving employee productivity; and reducing waste, pollution and environmental degradation."

Most importantly, Nenad learned the values of green are in line with their personal values, ones that living in the U.S., they concede, they'd compromised a bit.

Natives of Serbia, the Uzelacs admit they'd grown accustomed to the abundance of the American lifestyle and have been guilty of some wastefulness in the 10 years they've lived in the U.S. Biljana joked about her family's

astonishment about her long showers when she returns home to her native land.

That's all about to change. When they move into their new home, which is expected by summer's end, they will be able to say their footprint on Mother Earth is much gentler than that of most folks.

After hundreds of e-mails and phone calls over about eight months, architect Debra Coleman from Sun Plans, Inc. provided plans that elated the couple, custom-designed for their lifestyle. Then, they went looking for a builder that has a reputation for meeting green standards. They chose Cook Builders in Crown Point.

Nenad plans to put some teeth behind his claim, as he is striving to earn a top nod from a green building rating program, such as the National Green Building Standard from the National Association for Home Builders (NAHB), Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED) from the Green Building Council or Energy Star, awarded by the EPA. In fact, he scours the standards from these programs, looking for more ways to green up the plans he discusses with his builder.

Here are a few ways in which the Uzelacs are greening up their act.

SMALLER, AND BETTER

One of the most obvious ways to minimize a home's impact on the Earth is to build it as small as possible. The Uzelac homestead will be 2,601 square feet, just one square foot more than the subdivision's minimum standard. His engineering background to aid him, Nenad scrutinizes the materials the builder orders and makes sure the design is as maintenance-free as possible as



TONY V. MARTIN PHOTOS | THE TIMES

TOP: Nenad Uzelac and his wife, Biljana, and their son, Kosta, 4, show off the computer model of their new home. The model shows the passive solar system of southern exposure windows on the home. The Uzelac family focused their concern for the environment into the design. The St. John home will be one of the first completely green homes in Northwest Indiana.

ABOVE: In their current home Nenad uses a computer-controlled lighting system that he can control with his cellphone from anywhere. The remote control system allows more ecologically sound use of energy resources.

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SUGAR-SWEETENED SOFT DRINKS:

The taste may differ, but don't kid yourself they're actually a bit healthier

BY ROSIE MESTEL
Los Angeles Times

Given all the panic in the streets about high-fructose corn syrup, it's no surprise that beverage companies are making hay out of vintage formulations that use sugar from cane or beets in their beverages instead of the syrup. Many fans say the beverages taste better with sucrose — hence the following enjoyed by Mexican Coke.

It is also not surprising that the Sugar Association is thrilled by this development. In an applauded press release last week it "applauded Pepsi-Cola" for reintroducing Pepsi Throwback (For a limited time only! Hurry! Hurry!) and noted that "Pepsi Throw-



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Oh, how I long for a universal handyman

Used to be one handyman could fix everything: blown pipes, cold ovens, fallen fences, busted windows. Not anymore. Today every home ailment has a specialist. Last week, my house needed four: a drain guy (don't confuse him with a plumber), a refrigerator repairman, a heater expert, and my husband.

So began the handyman parade. The drain guy cleared the pasta jam. When I asked if he could also fix the kitchen faucet, which had come loose from the counter it was supposed to be stuck to, he said, "Sorry that requires a plumber's tool. I'm a drain expert." Silly me. I didn't dare ask him to look at the refrigerator, which had started making a noise like a helicopter.

Instead, I called the refrigerator repair company: "When the motor kicks in, the fridge makes this noise I have to shout over. This only happens when I'm talking, which, despite what my family thinks, isn't funny."

AT HOME



BY MARNI JAMESON

Next, the door handle broke. We couldn't open the most used door in the house, the one adjoining the mudroom to the garage, a port of entry busier than Ellis Island in 1907. Dan removed the lever handle and screwed it back on, hard. It worked for 10 minutes, then broke again. Frustrated, I grabbed my pink and purple tool kit and stripped the screw.

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